

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 180 496

IS 007 998

AUTHOR Seidner, Cathy
 TITLE The Use of OCLC for Serials Control.
 PUB DATE [78]
 NOTE 16p.: Best copy available
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS *Cataloging: Evaluation: *On Line Systems: Problems;
 *Serials: *Use Studies
 IDENTIFIERS *Ohio College Library Center

ABSTRACT

Designed for use by serials librarians concerned with the implementation of OCLC (Ohio College Library Center) in their individual libraries, librarians responsible for deciding to adopt OCLC rather than a competitive system or to add the Serials Subsystem to the services they already receive from OCLC, and information scientists and systems analysts who need feedback from the operational data of their designs in order to test or modify them, this paper briefly reviews the use of OCLC for serials control. Sources cited include evaluative studies, factual material written by OCLC, and case studies of libraries using the system. Problems encountered with the system are discussed. Appendices provide an OCLC chronology a bibliography of case studies of OCLC users, and a sample OCLC check-in record of a serial. (Author/JD)

 * Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
 * from the original document. *

ED180496

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

THE USE OF OCLC FOR SERIALS CONTROL

Cathy Seidner
Program Assistant
Institute for Urban
and Minority Education
Teachers College
Columbia University

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Cathy Seidner

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

IR007998

The nature of the source material for this topic, as well as the reference tools most useful in ferreting out this material, have been dictated by the type of audience the topic would be of interest to. Since those involved with the application of OCLC to serials today are people in the library and information science fields, it was obvious that librarians would form the greatest part of the audience, and this meant that library journals would be of prime importance. To get at these articles three library indexes were consulted: Library Literature (for article written since 1970, the date of OCLC's inception), Library and Information Services Today, and CALL. Primarily, attention was paid to those articles written since 1974, the date marking the beginning of the CONSER project and OCLC's implementation of the MARC format for serials.

Secondly, because it was felt that factual matter by OCLC would be as vital to this paper as the reactive material in the library literature, the OCLC Implementation Memos were carefully scrutinized. (Specifically, the SUNY/OCLC memos, since those are the ones that apply to this area of the country.

After a brief examination of some of the articles included in the above two categories, it became clear that there^{was} two prevalent approaches to the topic. One, mostly theoretical, was concerned with the impact OCLC, and the application of OCLC to serials control, would have on the fields of communication and library science. This approach seemed primarily geared to library school academicians. The other, mostly quantitative approach, was of an evaluative and applied nature. This seemed geared to serials librarians concerned with the implementation of OCLC in their

individual libraries, to librarians who would be making the decision to adopt OCLC rather than a competitive system or to add the Serials Subsystem to the services they already received from OCLC, and to information scientists and system analysts, who would be interested in obtaining feedback from the operational data of their designs in order to test or modify accordingly.

For the purposes of this paper the second orientation seemed most pertinent, and thus the articles used as sources were limited to evaluative studies, factual material written by OCLC, and case studies of libraries using the system. Also, since libraries not already on OCLC might choose to adopt another type of automated system, articles and case studies about competitor and alternative systems were also included.

With respect to competitor systems, namely RLIN and WLN, a comprehensive, definitive study has been done.¹ Unfortunately, this monograph, although predicted for publication in the Fall of 1978, has not yet been made available from the publishers to the libraries consulted. Therefore, because of both the availability and unavailability of this source, only alternative systems are considered in this paper. By alternative is meant the use of an automated in-house system or a system designed for a consortium such as a group of special libraries.

Another audience considered was the library users. However, they are not involved in the decision making process in any way. Rather, they are obligated to use whatever system a specific library has chosen. Thus, the role of the user is merely that of following the instructions

1

Yarborough, J., Jacobs, M., and Wood, R. Online Resource Sharing II; California: California Library Authority for Systems and Services, (1978).

laid out by the individual libraries. Because of this, it was felt that they were not a relevant audience for this paper.

There are two ways in which libraries may apply OCLC to serials control. One is through the use of the Bibliographic record in the Cataloguing system and the other is through the use of the Serials Control subsystem. These two possibilities should be discussed separately.

The bibliographic records for serials are comparable to those for monographs. The format is MARC-based and the cataloguing process for different libraries is therefore assured of a little more uniformity than is obtained through the use of AACR². There are some serious problems inherent to the system, however. Records in the data base for journals and periodicals are primarily those input as part of the CONSER project. They are of varying quality, ranging from full cataloguing to nothing but title and publisher. Also, there is a substantial number done in latest entry format, which most libraries have abandoned in favor of the successive entry format now followed by the Library of Congress and advocated by OCLC. A large number of them are inaccessible by title, since the general search keys used (for Journal of, etc) often yield more than the acceptable limit of 256 entries. Records for newsletters are virtually non-existent.

The problem with the non-periodical serials is much more serious. Overall, the quality of contributive serial records is poor, providing very little information not readily obtained from the piece at hand. Library of Congress records are not generally available for recent material, since the practice at L.C. is to catalogue every new serial as a monograph until it has been established a few years and then recatalogue it as a serial.

For both periodical and non-periodical serials, changes in frequency, publisher, size, and so forth, which are quite common, are not entered in the OCLC data base until a contributive library using a particular record discovers the change and sends in an error report to OCLC, who will then update only the specific record cited in the error report, leaving all other bibliographic records for the same title untouched. Participating libraries are not allowed to modify the database in any way. They can only update their own archive tapes.

Conversely, it is in the handling of these changes by local libraries that OCLC proves the greatest asset in serials cataloguing. It is easier and more cost effective to update the local records on the terminal and then have new cards produced than to have to do it manually.

Overall, most libraries using OCLC only in the cataloguing mode have found it to be a great improvement. However, it is necessary to enter the OCLC control number in the checklist cards in order to have easy access to these bibliographic records. Those libraries using the check-in system as well have found it vital to have a list of all their titles with corresponding OCLC numbers for retrieval purposes, since the use of the author/title and title search keys to access the material is both very time consuming and unreliable, as mentioned above.

The local data records (LDR) used in the check-in mode are accessible by those same OCLC numbers, since they are derived from the bibliographic records. A library must have its holding symbol on a bibliographic record in order to have a check-in record for that title. The OCLC number, frequency, title, ISSN number, and regularity codes are all derived from the cataloguing record. This means that all the problems with those fields previously mentioned are compounded in the check-in record. Most vital of these is the frequency code, which determines the

automatic check-in features and date of expectancy for the next issue in the local check-in records.

The check-in subsystem, which is entered through a different log-in number than the cataloguing subsystem, is available in two operating modes, the automatic and the manual. The automatic mode is ideally used for all checking-in of new material, where the information in the "NEXT (issue)" field is automatically transferred to the "current holdings (CRHD)" field when the library indicated it has received the next expected issue. The manual mode is where all the fields can be manipulated by the OCLC operator, and is ideally used for binding and claiming transactions. There is an updating charge for use of the automatic mode and no charge for use of the manual mode.

Unfortunately, reality does not run true to the ideal situation.

In the automatic mode, things only run smoothly

under certain very specific conditions. The system has defined only standard frequencies for automatic check-in, and only if a title fits a defined frequency will automatic check-in work every time an issue is received ...The defined frequencies are: monthly, weekly, semimonthly, quarterly, and so on. The system also assumes that there is one volume per year of a title. Within these restrictions, the system expects a monthly publication to have one volume of 12 issues per year, a weekly to have one volume of 52 issues per year, and so forth....Although this pattern is followed by many titles, there are also many titles that only approximate these requirements. American Libraries is a good example. It is published at a rate of one volume a year, but it only has 11 issues per volume... After checking in the December issue, which will be No. 11, the system will predict a 12th issue for the current volume rather than making a correct prediction of the 1st issue of the next volume.... The system tries to predict the date of arrival of the next issue of a title and obviously it will make some errors in the prediction of the July/August and September issues. This will eventually cause problems once automatic claiming is made available.²

²Kamens, Harry H. "OCLC's Serials Control Subsystem: A Case Study" in The Serials Librarian; v. 3, no. 1, Fall 1978; p.49.

The binding and claiming modes of the serials control subsystem are as yet inoperative. This means that a non-OCLC system for claiming must be maintained by the library and that binding information must be manipulated through the retrospective holdings and remarks fields. This signifies that each library, as well as being greatly inconvenienced, is responsible for the local definition of each field in the check-in record so that the individual needs of that library can be served.

The ensuing lack of uniformity in usage makes it virtually impossible for one library to properly interpret the records of another library. This is one of the main deterrents in having libraries in a consortium access each others holdings on-line. The other is that if one library provides its log-in number to others, they can change the information on the records at will. Most libraries are wary of conferring such power to others. Optimal ways of handling these problems are very much dependent on the make-up of the individual consortium.

It is interesting to note that while libraries consider these things serious problems in the Serials Sxbsystem, OCLC considers them almost an asset. In their opinion, "the serials control subsystem was specifically designed to be a flexible, generalized system, capable of handling the sometimes local nature of various serials functions, e.g. location within the holding library; acquisitions data such as vendor, invoice number, subscription period; binding information; holdings statements, etc... The system's flexibility does necessitate making certain policy decisions, which could be termed local problems..."³

Those readers who think this is a hindsight excuse for a poorly designed systems program and planning are most likely doing OCLC a disservice, since they are probably sincere in what they communicate to their constituency.

³ SUNY/OCLC Implementation memo no. 169, p. 1.

The present state of the system is best summarized by quoting LJ:

OCLC's new Serials Control subsystem "as it now functions does not provide adequate, cost-effective support to users," says Ann Ekstrom, director of OCLC's Library System Division. And OCLC has decided to maintain curbs on participation by users "until improvements are made to the automatic check-in component and a claims component is added." There's a demand for serials control: OCLC imposed a ceiling on participation in its serials subsystem in January of 1977.... But the system is not working effectively, even though only a fourth of the 125 institutions authorized to check in serials are using the service.

Ekstrom pinpointed some of the system's shortcomings. Present search key structures are inadequate in many instances to quickly retrieve a record. Individual libraries, consequently, must maintain a manual cross-reference file of OCLC control numbers to retrieve some serials records. Also: the "next expected issue" cannot be accurately predicted in some cases. And the claiming component, which is viewed by users to be essential to the subsystem, is not yet available.⁴

Nonetheless, almost all the case studies consulted agreed that OCLC's serial control subsystem had serious drawbacks for their technical services, but that the benefits derived by the users were enough to make it worthwhile. Central Michigan University, as a result of their test studies, "expect the system to be extremely beneficial for public service work. The screen display will provide to ...patrons in a single file the status of all serials records including receipt, claim, notice of order, bindery, title changes, or location. This file will be available all hours the system is up -- and these appear to be increasing.⁵ The availability of extra hours is a much valued advantage, since most libraries have their check-in records located in the technical services area, which is usually open only 9 to 5 on weekdays.

⁴"OCLC's serials control: problems pegged" in Library Journal; June 1, 1978; p. 1122.

⁵Buckeye, Nancy Melin. "The OCLC Serials Subsystem: Implementation/ Implications at Central Michigan University" in The Serials Librarian; v. 3, no. 1, Fall 1978; p.41.

At Kent State University, "OCLC's Serials Control Subsystem has helped improve the library's operations. The system still has many weaknesses, which will of course need to be corrected....Our satisfaction is based on the system providing what we expected of it, namely, an increase in ability to provide public service for serials....A library that had as its primary objective the enhancement of its technical handling of serials would [not] achieve the same level of satisfaction."⁶

One notable exception to this overall satisfaction, surprisingly enough, is the Ohio University Library. After testing the OCLC serials control subsystem, they noted on their report to OCLC, "On the whole, we are fairly well satisfied with the automatic system's potential. Our problems with it are, perhaps, predictable but they are major enough that we are now planning to postpone further use of the automatic system until the system is more stabilized and refined..."⁷

The criticisms that are made, are not made of automated systems per se (although several libraries stated that their manual check-in method was faster than the automated one), but, rather, they are made of OCLC's automated system. As well as using one of the competitive systems previously noted, that is RLIN and WLN, libraries have a choice of designing their own automated system for serials control; or, if they lack the funds for such an undertaking, designing a system for the use of a consortium.

Two examples of such alternatives merit analysis. One, of the first type, is the Northwestern University Library. The other is the

⁶

Kamens, p. 54.

⁷

Ohio University Library, (Report), in SUNY/OCLC Implementation Memo # 169. September 2, 1977.

Washington University School of Medicine Library, whose network system was replicated by the Medical Library Center of New York.

At Northwestern University, the computer-maintained central Serials record, which has claiming capabilities,

...is one portion of Northwestern's On-Line Total Integrated System (NOTIS). IBM 3270 cathode-ray-tube terminals are used to access a file of records maintained in the university's administrative data-processing computer. Access is by key search code, which is a truncation of the words used in the record's entry, be it title or corporate author/title. (this search key is far superior to OCLC's. For example, the search key for the Journal of Library Automation is jou libautoma. In OCLC, it would be jou,li,au, a much more general one). Records consist of combinations of some twenty-seven different kinds of MARC-based or local data fields, which are mnemonically tagged. Records are linked to each other through use of related record (RR) fields....Whenever the decision is made to order a new title, provisional bibliographic data is entered into the file, together with the necessary order data. This data forms the basis for purchase-order production... As the subscription becomes active and invoices are received, the record is used for payment control, all data as to the amount, invoice date and number, and items billed being recorded in the same computer record.... Once the piece is received, a serials cataloguer, using the same record initially input at the time of order, changes the provisional bibliographic data to full bibliographic data in MARC-based format...This edited data is then used to produce catalogue cards by computer. Whenever a change in title occurs, the record is modified, a new record created, and linked with the old, and new cards called from each. If the ~~title~~ ceases, both the entry and the order are closed. The file thus reflects both active and inactive records, as any centralized serial record should.... Check-in begins when a terminal operator receives a piece, derives a key search code, and inputs a search command (SCH) to the computer file...The computer responds with a file number if it finds a record which matches the key. The operator in turn opens the record for modification by typing the modify (MOD) command. Once the record is opened for modification, the operator performs 3 steps. 1) determines that the record indeed matches the piece in hand...2) altering the volume holding field (VH) to reflect receipt...3) dispatches the piece into the library collection. If the location is not given in an internal data field...the operator displays the call number (CN) field to determine the location⁸

⁸Willmering, William J., "On-Line Centralized Serials Control" in The Serials Librarian; v. 1, no. 3; Spring 1977; pp. 243 -249.

The Serials Control Network created by the Washington University School of Medicine stemmed from their in-house system which had been operational since 1963, PHILSOM (an acronym for Periodicals Held In the Library of the School of Medicine). In 1969 the system was reprogrammed to accommodate a number of libraries and in 1973, was revised^{ed} in the context of the then current state-of-the-art of computing hardware, programming concepts, and serials bibliography. This resulted in the design of a completely new system for the processing of serials information, to be known as PHILSOM III. The essential features of the system are as follows:

After considering a number of data base formats, including those of SERLINE and the Union Catalog of Medical Periodicals, it was decided to build the new system in compatibility with that of the National Serials Data Program, primarily because its key title concept was most compatible with the shelving arrangement by cover title common to most medical libraries.

The system will not attempt to produce catalog cards of any kind. It is hoped that PHILSOM will eliminate the necessity of maintaining catalog card records for serials.

It is possible, as an extra cost option, to print some lists in other than strict PHILSOM title authority order. Thus, both direct entry and corporate entry are provided for.

The local librarian has complete control over, and responsibility for, all data which are unique to his library. The network coordinator at the central library has responsibility for the accuracy and currency of the basic bibliographic data. Network member libraries may access (but not change) the basic bibliographic data.

It is not expected that the data base will exceed 85,000 titles, plus cross references; and that the number of libraries in the network will exceed 99. In all of these parameters the system's capabilities far exceed the expected peak load.

The system is designed to be operated by network libraries without experts in computer systems.

Each member library will be provided with complete control over its file of location data.

A dispersed computing network was selected. The reason for this selection, rather than the central computer network exemplified by the OCLC system, has to do with the costs of transmitting data around a dispersed, thinly populated network. The only way to justify the continuing lease cost of long distance telephone lines is to use them far more intensely than this network requires.

On the other hand, the capital investment required to obtain a mini-computer substantial enough for serials control is now within the resources of some medical libraries and the operating cost is modest.

The author believes that this experience will be of great interest to special libraries. This system is being developed because the standard conventions for serials control in medical libraries are not shared by larger university libraries. Moreover, the cost of the system development are justified if the benefits of the system are spread over a number of libraries who intensively use a relatively small common data base.⁹

In conclusion, it seems that OCLC has problems with its Serials Control Subsystem that are not shared by alternative systems. However, these systems seem to work best when they are designed for a specific audience with special needs, such as a large University system with many branch and departmental libraries, or as a group of special libraries. The OCLC system still seems the best approach for the more general, public and academic, libraries. Its problems are serious, and in many cases inherent in the system design, but they can be manipulated around by the participating libraries to provide a better system than it would be possible for them without automation at all.

⁹

Johnson, Millard F. Jr., "A Design for a Mini-Computer Based Serials Control Network" in Special Libraries; August 1976; pp. 386 - 390.

APPENDIX A
OCLC Chronology

1971

August — Inception of OCLC's on-line catalogue and shared cataloguing system.

1974

July — OCLC announces that participating libraries could begin to input serials bibliographic records.

December—CLR contracts to use the OCLC system for the CONSER project.

1975

January —Input of on-line local-data records operational; in-house and field testing begun.

October —Kent State inputs the first on-line serial check-in record.

December—Training for Ohio Libraries.

1976

Small number of Ohio libraries began conversion of holdings to on-line records.

July -

December In-house and field testing of automatic check-in.

August — OCLC removes author index from weekday service between 8:00 AM and 5:00PM in order to improve response times.

December—Serials check-in becomes operational.

December-

Jan. 1977 Training for Ohio libraries in automatic check-in, and for network coordinators in all operational aspects of Serials Control.

1977

January— OCLC imposes a ceiling of 150 institutions on participation in the Serial Subsystem.

October— OCLC divides author index into corporate and personal files.

OCTOBER— OCLC announces the availability of card production for serials.

APPENDIX B

PUBLISHED CASE STUDIES OF OCLC USERS

CASE WESTERN RESERVE

SUNY/OCLC Implementation Memo # 169. September 2, 1977.

CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Buckeye, Nancy Melin. "The OCLC Serials Subsystem: Implementation/Implications at Central Michigan University" in The Serials Librarian; v. 3, no. 1, Fall 1978; pp. 31-42.

KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

Kamens, Harry H. "OCLC's Serials Control Subsystem: A Case Study" in The Serials Librarian; v. 3, no. 1, Fall 1978; pp. 43-55.

Scott, J.W., and Allison, A.M. "United States Documents in an On-Line Catalog" in The Serials Librarian; V. 1, no. 4, Summer 1977; pp. 365-371.

OHIO UNIVERSITY

SUNY/OCLC Implementation Memo # 169. September 2, 1977.

ROCKLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

SUNY/OCLC Implementation Memo # 169. September 2, 1977.

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

SUNY/OCLC Implementation Memo # 169. September 2, 1977.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS @ URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Corey, James F. "OCLC and Serials Processing; a State of Transition at the University of Illinois" in The Serials Librarian; v. 3, no. 1, Fall 1978; pp. 57-67.

APPENDIX C

Sample check-in record*

CELL STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION.

ISSN: OCLC NO: 2381348 FREQU: Q REGULAR: R

→ HLD LIB: : : COPY: REPR: SUBSC STAT: LOAN:

→ 1 CLNO #B
 → 2 LOCN #B
 → 3 FUND
 → 4 RMKS
 → 5 DEFN #V VOL. #P NO.
 → 6 NEXT #V #P #D

→ DATE RECD:

→ 7 CRHD #V #P
 → 8 RTHD #V #P
 → 9 CLMS #B #C #D
 → 10 BNDG

FIELD CRHD REPLACED

ABSTRACTS ON HYGIENE

ABSTRACTS ON HYGIENE

ISSN: 0001-3692 OCLC NO: 1460597 FREQU: M REGULAR: R

→ HLD LIB: VVDR COPY: REPR: SUBSC STAT: A LOAN

→ 1 CLNO
 → 2 LOCN REFERENCE
 → 3 FUND RMB
 → 4 RMKS
 → 5 DEFN #V VOL. #P NO.
 → 6 NEXT #V 54 #P 2 #D 790414

→ DATE RECD: 790118 790314 790314 777777 790314 790314

→ 7 CRHD #V 53 #P 1-10,12 #V 54 #P 1
 → 8 RTHD 43-51 (1976) 52.
 → 9 CLMS
 → 10 BNDG

*Courtesy of Downstate Medical Center